

P. Smith, R. Harris
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 Secret History of
 America's First
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 Agency

The OSS and its "wide ideological spectrum"

SMITH, R. Harris. *OSS: the Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency*. 512p. illus. bibliog. index. Univ. of California Pr. 1972. \$11.95. ISBN 0-520-02023-5. LC 73-153553.

HIST
 The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was America's chief agency for intelligence collection and special operations during World War II. Of the books that have been written about the OSS, none has treated the subject in such broad and detailed a manner as does Smith's. He has reviewed the existing literature and added information gathered from over 200 interviews and written responses from former OSS and State Department members. His discussion of the cooperation of OSS men with various underground resistance groups is free from the melodrama so often present in other accounts, and he presents a very useful political and military perspective.

Smith also describes the wide ideological spectrum which existed in OSS

and looks upon it as a healthy thing. He makes clear his belief that the liberal end of that spectrum was of greater importance to the success of many OSS operations than was the conservative end. In his closing chapter he compares the OSS and the CIA; again, the presence of a liberal element is held to be of key importance. He documents, however, the failure of much of the liberal community to recognize the potential of an intelligence organization sympathetic to the non-Communist Left internationally. His conclusion reveals little hope that the liberals will achieve such an enlightened attitude, for it is to the organization that he addresses himself. He states, "unless the Agency leadership makes a determined effort to renew the OSS passion for democratic dissent . . . the reality of CIA may soon coincide with its sinister image in the intellectual community." A benchmark in the literature on American intelligence for years to come.—George H. Siehl, *Library of Congress*

Siehl, George H.